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Message Text

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P R 161000Z FEB 78
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8056
INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT POUCH
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AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
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AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
USINT HAVANA
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GERMANY

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 3 ALGIERS 0532

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E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, ENRG, AG, US, XA, XF, /8, XJ
SUBJ: AMBASSADOR'S TOUR D'HORIZON WITH ALGERIAN PRESIDENT BOUMEDIENE

1. SUMMARY: DURING AMBASSADOR'S TOUR D'HORIZON WITH BOUMEDIENE, LATTER COMMENTED ON NUMBER OF TOPICAL ISSUES. MEETING BEGAN WITH PRAISE FOR EXIM ACTIVITIES AS CONTRIBUTING TO ALGERIAN DEVELOPMENT, THEN TURNED TO POLITICAL TOPICS. ON HORN OF AFRICA SITUATION BOU-MEDIENE EXPRESSED GOA CONCERN WITH SAFEGUARDING INVIOLABILITY OF
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AFRICAN BORDERS AND INDICATED GOA SUPPORT FOR USG POSITION RE SOM-ALIA. GOA/FRENCH RELATIONS, HE INDICATED NO HOPE OF RECONCILIATION UNLESS FRANCE DISENGAGES MILITARILY FROM MAGHREB.SAHARA, REITERATED FIRM SUPPORT FOR POLISARIO AND CONCERN RE U.S. ARMS SALES TO MORO-CCO. ON GOA/BIG POWER RELATIONS, HE STATED GOA INTENTION OF REMAIN-ING FRIENDLY WITH BOTH BUT UNDER INFLUENCE OF NEITHER AND EXPRESSED CONCERN WITH BIG POWER USE OF SURROGATES TO FURTHER AIMS ON AFRICAN

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CONTINENT. ON MIDDLE EAST, HE REPEATED GOA CONCERN WITH SADAT'S SOLO INITIATIVES AND ALSO COMMENTED BRIEFLY ON TUNISIAN DOMESTIC SCENE AND CUBAN ROLE IN AFRICA. IT IS CLEAR THAT ALTHOUGH MAJOR DIFFERENCES REMAIN, BOUMEDIENE DOES WISH TO CONTINUE THE DIALOGUE. END SUMMARY.

2. THE SETTING. AT MY REQUEST, ALGERIAN PRESIDENT HOUARI BOUMEDIENE GRANTED ME AN APPOINTMENT FOR A TOUR D'HORIZON WITH HIM ON TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 14. THE MEETING, WHICH LASTED TWO HOURS, WAS HELD IN HIS OFFICE AT THE PRESIDENCY IN AN AREA HEAVILY GUARDED BY MEMBERS OF THE PRESIDENTIAL GUARD HOLDING RIFLES FIXED WITH BAYONETS AT THE READY. UPON MY ARRIVAL, I REVIEWED A CONTINGENT OF ABOUT TWELVE PRESIDENTIAL GUARDS IN FORMAL DRESS WITH SWORDS DRAWN. I WAS THEN USHERED INTO A WING OF THE PRESIENCY CONTAINING A LARGE RECEPTION ROOM WHERE I WAITED FOR ABOUT A MINUTE BEFORE THE PRESIDENT HIMSELF ENTERED. MY ARRIVAL AND THE PRESIDENT'S GREETING ME WAS FILMED BY THREE MOTION PICTURE CAMERAMEN AND ONE STILL PHOTOGRAPHER. THE PRE-SIDENT WAS RELAXED, JOCULAR, SMILING AND ANIMATED THROUGHOUT OUR TALKS. I FOUND THIS IN MARKED CONTRAST TO HIS PUBLIC IMAGE WITH WHICH I AM MORE FAMILIAR: I.E., UNSMILING, SEVERE, SALLOW-FACED AND A SOMEWHAT LONELY AND WITHDRAWN FIGURE. HIS NATURALLY MOUSEY-COLORED BROWN HAIR HAD OBVIOUSLY BEEN FRESHLY DYED BLACK, ALTHOUGH HIS GRAYING MOSTACHE AND SIDEBURNS REMAINED THEIR NATURAL COLOR. UNFORTUNATELY, I FOUND MYSELF FIXING MY ATTENTION ON THE FACT OF HIS LOPSIDED MOUSTACHE DURING OUR TWO HOURS TOGETHER (IT HELD FOR ME THE FASCINATION OF CYRANO DE BERGERAC'S NOSE*). HIS NAILS WERE

CAREFULLY MANICURED. HE WORE A BLACK BURNOOSE OVER A WELL-TAILORED BANKERS GREY VESTED BUSINESS SUIT AND STARCHED WHITE SHIRT WITH FRENCH(*) CUFFS. HE APPEARED SOMEWHAT PAUNCHY AROUND THE MID-SEC-TION. ONLY THE TWO OF US WERE PRESENT THROUGHOUT THE DISCUSSION WHICH HE SPRINKLED WITH OCCASIONAL WELL-PRONOUNCED ENGLISH EXPRES-SIONS. WHILE HE OFFERED ME A CHOICE OF TEA AND SOFT DRINKS, HE HIM-SELF TOOK ONLY WATER. IN CONCLUDING OUR EXCHANGE, THE PRESIDENT EX-PRESSED THE WISH THAT WE MEET FOR SUCH AN EXCHANGE OF VIEWS AT LEAST EVERY SIX MONTHS. THE PATTERN OF OUR "EXCHANGE" WAS FOR ME TO MERELY RAISE THE SUBJECTS ON WHICH HE WOULD THEN EXPOUND.

3. INAUGURATION OF LNG I: I TOLD THE PRESIDENT THAT, ASIDE FROM HAVING A GENERAL DISCUSSION WITH HIM, ONE OF MY MAIN OBJECTIVES WAS TO OBTAIN HIS AGREEMENT TO RECEIVE THE CHAIRMAN OF OUR EX-IM BANK WHO WOULD BE IN ALGERIA FOR THE INAUGURATION OF LNG I. HE REPLIED THAT HE PERSONALLY ATTACHES GREAT IMPORTANCE TO THE INAUGURATION OF THIS LINE BECAUSE OF WHAT IT MEANS TO ALGERIAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS AS A WHOLE. IN THIS CONNECTION, HE POINTED OUT TO ME THE SYMBOLIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LINKAGE IN OUR RELATIONS IN THE NAME OF THE LNG TANKER PRESENTLY AT ARZEW FOR THE INAUGURATION: "THE EL PASO-SONA-TRACH". HE SAID THAT HE WOULD BE DELIGHTED TO RECEIVE THE EX-IM BANK CHAIRMAN BECAUSE OF THIE IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION THE BANK IS MAKING

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TO ALGERIAN DEVELOPMENT.

4. THE HORN OF AFRICA: ON THIS ISSUE, BOUMEDIENE SAID "MY HEART IS WITH SOMALIA, BUT MY HEAD IS WITH ETHIOPIA". ALGERIA'S POLICY, HE SAID, IS TO SAFEGUARD THE INVIOLABILITY OF THE FRONTIERS IN AFRICA INHERITED FROM COLONIAL TIMES EVEN THOUGH THEY WERE ARBITARARILY DRAWN ON A MAP IN EUROPE. ANY OTHER POSITION WOULD RESULT IN PERPETUAL CONFLICT ON THE CONTINENT. IN VIEW OF THIS POSITION, ALGERIA FULLY SUPPORTS THE USG PROMISE OF POSSIBLE MILITARY AID TO SOMALIA IN THE EVENT THAT ETHIOPIAN FORCES CROSS SOMALIA'S BORDERS. HE THEN LAUGHED AND SAID THE USG'S PROMISE OF SUPPORT TO PRESIDENT BARRE OF SOMALIA WAS NOT BECAUSE "YOU AMERICANS LIKE HIS PRETTY EYES", BUT RATHER BECAUSE OF OUR CONCERN FOR SOVIET PENETRATION IN THE HORN. ON THAT SCORE, THE PRESIDENT SAID HE FIRMLY BELIEVES

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THAT THE SOVIETS AND CUBANS WILL NOT ALLOW THE ETHIOPIANS TO CORSS OVER INTO SOMALIA. TURNING TO A RELATED ISSUE, BOUMEDIENE SAID THAT HE HAD ADVISED OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES NOT TO BECOME INVOLVED IN THIS CONFLICT ON EITHER SIDE, BUT ESPECIALLY NOT ON THE SIDE OF SOMALIA BECAUSE IT WOULD ONLY PIT ARAB AGAINST AFRICAN ONCE AGAIN ON THE

CONTINENT. HE ADMITTED TO BEING "DEEPLY DISTURBED" BY SOMALIA'S EXPANSIONIST TENDENCIES WHICH COULD ONLY LEAD TO FUTURE CONFLICTS WITH KENYA AND DJIBOUTI.

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TO SECSTATE WAHSDC PRIORITY 8057
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AMEMBASSY DAKAR

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AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
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AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEBASSY TEL AVIV
USINT HAVANA
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GERMANY

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5. ALGIERIAN RELATIONS WITH FRANCE: IN COMMENTING ON FRANCO ALGERIAN RELATIONS, THE PRESIDENT SAID "ALL FRANCE HAS TO DO IS TICKLE ALGERIA IN ORDER TO REKINDLE THE OLD SENTIMENTS OF ALGERIAN HATRED THAT CARRIED US TO VICTORY IN THE WAR OF LIBERATION". DESPITE RECENT CONCILIATORY WORDS FROM GISCARD, BOUMEDIENE SAID THERE IS NO POSSIBILITY OF IMPROVEMENT IN RELATIONS UNLESS AND UNTIL FRANCE DISENGAGES MILITARILY FROM THE MAGHREB REGION. WITH RESPECT TO THE FRENCH VIEW OF ALGERIAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS,HE SAID THAT THE FRENCH ARE STILL UNABLE TO "SWALLOW AND DIGEST" THE FACT THAT THE
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U.S. HAS REPLACED FRANCE AS ALGERIA'S PRINCIPAL TRADING PARTNER. "INDEED", HE SAID, "THE REAL ENEMY OF THE U.S. IN AFRICA IS FRANCE AND NOT THE SOVIET UNION". HE CITED AS AN EXAMPLE THE WAY THE FRENCH TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE U.S. ARMS EMBARGO ON SOUTH AFRICA IN ORDER TO BECOME THAT COUNTRY'S MAJOR SOURCE OF ARMAMENTS AND MILITARY TECHNOLOGY.

6. ALGERIA AND BIG POWER RELATIONS: BOUMEDIENE SAID THAT ALGERIA CONSCIOUSLY BALANCES ITS RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO BIG POWER BLOCS. THAT IS, ALGERIA ENCOURAGES ITS COMMERCIAL AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. AND THE WEST WHILE ENCOURAGING ITS MILITARY SUPPLY RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIETS AND THE EAST. WHILE EACH BLOC TENDS TO BE UNHAPPY ABOUT ALGERIA'S RELATIONS WITH THE OTHER, THAT IS JUST THE WAY ALGERIA WANTS THINGS IN ORDER TO PRESERVE ITS INDEPENDENCE OF EITHER BLOC. HE CLAIMED TO BE PARTICULARLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE DANGERS INHERENT IN THE EMERGING PATTERN OF THE BIG POWERS USING SMALLER NATIONS TO DO THEIR DIRTY WORK IN AFRICA. HE CITED AS EXAMPLES THE SOVIETS USING THE CUBANS IN ETHIOPIA AND ANGOLA AND ALSO THE U.S. USING EGYPT IN THE MID EAST AND MOROCCO IN SHABA (ZAIRE).

IT IS, HE SAID, OFTEN DIFFICULT FOR THE BIG POWERS TO CONTROL THEIR "TOOLS" AND TO GET THEM TO DISENGAGE UPON COMMAND. (IN THE INTEREST OF KEEPING THE CONVERSATION ALIVE, I DID NOT DRAW THE OBVIOUS COMPARISON TO ALGERIAN USE OF THE POLISARIO IN THE WESTERN SAHARA.)

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7. SAHARA: BOUMEDIENE CLAIMS THAT IN 1963 PRESIDENT KENNEDY SAID THAT IF EVER THE U.S. WANTED TO GET AT ALGERIA, WE WOULD USE MOROCCO TO DO SO. BOUMEDIENE SAYS THAT HE HAS NEVER FOGOTTEN THIS "THREAT", HOWEVER IDLY IT MAY HAVE BEEN MADE. WITH THIS IN MIND, HE HOPED THE USG COULD UNDERSTAND WHY HIS GOVERNMENT WAS "AROUSED" (HE USED THE FRENCH EXPRESSION, "EMU") BY THE NEWS THAT THE DEPARTMENT WAS CONSULTING CONGRESS ON A POSSIBLE FACORABLE RESPONSE TO THE MOROCCAN REQUEST FOR ARMS TO BE USED AGAINST THE POLISARIO. HE WANTED ME TO

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KNOW THAT I HAD BEEN SUMMONED TO THE MFA ON HIS PERSONAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR CLARIFICATION OF THE USG POSITION ON THIS MATTER. NEVERTHELESS, BOUMEDIENE SAID THAT HE WANTED ME TO PASS HIS PERSONAL ASSURANCE TO PRESIDENT CARTER THAT HE WOULD NEVER PERMIT ALGERIAN FORCES TO INVADE MOROCCO UNLESS MOROCCO MAKES THE FIRST AGGRESSIVE MOVE TO INVADE ALGERIA, WHETHER OR NOT IN HOT PURSUIT OF THE POLISARIO. WERE MOROCCO TO INVADE ALGERIA, HE SAID, "I WOULD SHOW NO CHRISTIAN CHARITY

IN CRUSHING THE MOROCCAN FORCES TEN TIMES OVER". HE CLAIMED THAT MUCH OF THE SOPHISTICATED MILITARY HARDWARE SUPPLIED TO MOROCCO BY THE U.S. IS USELESS IN GUERRILLA WARFARE IN THE SAHARA. THEREFORE, HE SAID, ALGERIA CAN ONLY ASSUME THAT MOROCCO INTENDS TO USE THAT HARDWARE AGAINST ALGERIA. THE PRESIDENT CLAIMS THE EXISTENCE OF AN ANTI-ALGERIAN AXIS FORMED TO OPPOSE THE ALGERIAN POSITION IN THE SAHARA AND CONSISTING OF FRANCE, MOROCCO, MAURITANIA AND SENEGAL. HOWEVER, REFERRING TO THE RECENT NEW YORK TIMES EDITORIAL, HE EXPRESSED RELIEF THAT AT LEAST IN THE U.S. SOME PEOPLE APPEAR TO UNDERSTAND THE ALGERIAN POSITION ON THE SAHARA. HE SATED CATEGORICALLY THAT THE GOA WOULD NOT ABANDON ITS SUPPORT OF THE POLISARIO BECAUSE THE SUPPORT OF STRUGGLES FOR LIBERATION IS TOO FIRMLY EMBEDDED IN ALGERIAN FOREIGN POLICY. HE SAID THAT HE WAS NOT AT ALL SURPRISED BY KING HASSAN'S CANCELLATION OF HIS VISIT TO THE U.S. AS "HASSAN REALLY CAN NEVER TRUST YOU AMERICANS". BOUMEDIENE CLAIMS THAT THE BASIS FOR THIS MISTRUST IS THE MOROCCAN KING'S FIRM BELIEF, OFTEN REPEATED BY HIM TO BOUMEDIENE IN THE PAST, THAT THE U.S. MILITARY IN MOROCCO COULD HAVE PREVENTED THE ABORTED ATTACK ON HIS PERSONAL AIRPLANE BY MOROCCAN ELEMENTS SET ON OVERTHROWING HIM SEVERAL YEARS AGO.

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8. MIDDLE EAST: BOUMEDIENE EXPLAINED THAT ALGERIA IS UPSET BY THE SADAT PEACE INITIATIVES BECAUSE HE IS GOING IT ALONE. HE FEELS THAT THE PLO AND SYRIA MUST BE INCLUDED, WITH EGYPT, IF ANY SUCH PEACE EFFORTS ARE TO BE EFFECTIVE. HE IS PERSONALLY CONCERNED TO SUPPORT SYRIA WHOSE MILITARY CAPACITY IS SPREAD THEN AND WHOSE ECONOMY IS SAPPED DUE TO THE NEED FOR SYRIA TO MAINTAIN PEACE-KEEPING FORCES IN LEBANON. THE PRESIDENT SAID THAT HE ALSO FELT THAT THE COORDINATED US-SOVIET EFFORTS TO BRING THE PARTIES TO GENEVA SHOWED GREAT PROMISE OF SUCCESS JUST BECAUSE THOSE EFFORTS INCLUDED ALL PARTIES TO THE
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MID EAST DISPUTE. HOWEVER,HE SAID, SADAT'S INITIATIVES HAVE SABO-TAGED FOREVER THE JOINT US-SOVIET EFFORTS. WITH THE SOVIETS CUT OUT OF SADAT'S PEACE INITIATIVES, ONE CANNOT COUNT ON THE SOVIETS TO EXERCISE ANY KIND OF CONSTRUCTIVE INFLUENCE OVER THEIR ARAB FRIENDS. INDEED, BOUMEDIENE SAID, SADAT'S INITIATIVES ARE SO MUCH HIS OWN BRAINCHILD THAT IF HE WERE TO HAVE A HEART ATTACK AND DIE RIGHT NOW, HIS SUCCESSOR WOULD BE SURE TO ABANDON THEM. IN THIS CONNECTION, BOUMEDIENE SAYS HE HAS NOW COME TO BELIEVE THAT THE USG WAS AS MUCH TAKEN BY SURPRISE BY SADAT'S MOVES AS WAS THE REST OF THE WORLD. (IN AN APPARENTLY UNRELATED DEVISATIO, BOUMEDIENE HINTED THAT HE

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SUSPECTED ARAFAT WAS NOW SECRETLY TALKING WITH THE USG. WHEN I ASKED HIM THE NATURE OF THOSE SECRET TALKS, HE DECLINED TO ANSWER.)

9. TUNISIA: BOUMEDIENE SAID HE WAS VERY CONCERNED ABOUT RECENT EVENTS IN TUNISIA AND WAS FOLLOWING THEM CLOSELY. BECAUSE HE SEES NO BENEFIT TO BE DERIVED FROM INTERVENING IN A NEIGHBOR'S PROBLEMS, THE GOA HAS BEEN DELIBERATELY SILENT WHEN IT COMES TO COMMENTING ON TUNISIA'S PROBLEMS. THE ONE EXCEPTION TO THIS SILENCE WAS A RECENT SMALL OUTBURST OF CRITICISM BY THE ALGERIAN UGTA OF THE OATUU SUPPORT FOR THE NEW UGTT LEADERSHIP. (SEE ALGIERS 0516.)

10. CUBA: THE PRESIDENT STATED THAT HIS OWN REPORTS OF THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF CUBAN PRESENCE IN AFRICA AGREE WITH THE USG ESTIMATES HE HAS RECENTLY SEEN IN THE WESTERN PRESS. HE SAID THAT HE HAS REPEATEDLY WARNED BOTH FIDEL AND RAUL CASTOR THAT "CUBAN INVOLVEMENT IN AFRICA ONLY LEADS TO MORE CUBAN INVOLVEMENT IN AFRICA", ENDING UP WITH CUBA APPEARING AS THE "NEW OPRESSOR" ON THE CONTINENT.

11. COMMENT: IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE HOW STATESMAN-LIKE BOUMEDIENE CAN MAKE HIMSELF APPEAR BY "SELECTIVE" ENUNCIATION OF FAMILIAR GOA POSITIONS. THIS NOTWITHSTANDING, BOTH THE LENGTH OF HIS PRESENTATION AND THE POINTS HE MADE, SUGGEST THAT HE WISHES TO MAINTAIN A DIALOGUE WITH THE U.S. AND, OF COURSE, TO PRESENT ALGERIA'S POSITIONS
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AND ACTIONS IN THE BEST POSSIBLE LIGHT FOR VIEWING BY AMERICAN EYES. HIS INSISTENCE THAT HE WOULD NEVER ATTACK MOROCCO, HIS PRESENTATION ON THE HORN OF AFRICA, AND HIS CLAIM TO HAVE WARNED THE CUBANS ON THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN AFRICA, ALL WOULD SEEM TAILORED TO MEET U.S. CONCERN OVER ALGERIAN RADICALISM. THE SAME IS TRUE OF HIS COMMENTS ON THE NEED FOR A BALANCE BETWEEN U.S. AND SOVIET INFLUENCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA, BUT HERE HE IS TOUCHING UPON A THEME THAT IS MORE CENTRAL TO ALGERIAN THINKING.

AT THE SAME TIME, BOUMEDIENE DOES NOT SHY AWAY FROM OUR DIFFERENCES AND IS PLAINLY "AROUSED" BY A NUMBER PROBLEMS IN ADDITION TO OUR CONSULTATIONS WITH CONGRESS ON ARMS SALES TO MOROCCO. HIS OPPOSITION TO FRENCH POLICY IN THE REGION IS AS STRONG AS EVER. HIS COMMITMENT TO THE POLISARIO, AND HIS CERTAINTY THAT THE GUERRILLAS ULTIMATELY WILL PREVAIL, REMAINS UNCHANGED.

IN BRIEF THEN, BOUMEDIENE RECOGNIZES OUR DIFFERENCES BUT IS PREPARED TO LIVE WITH THEM AND TO KEEP THEM SEPARATE FROM OTHER ASPECTS OF OUR RELATIONSHIP WHICH ARE IMPORTANT TO HIM. HE IS ALSO QUITE PLAINLY READY TO CONTINUE TELLING US HIS VIEWS AND HAS LEFT THE DOOR OPEN FOR HEARING OUR OWN.

AS A FINAL NOTE, THE SOMALI AMBASSADOR SAW BOUMEDIENE FOR 45 MINUTES IN THE LATE AFTERNOON AFTER MY MEETING IN THE COURSE OF WHICH, ACCORDING TO THE AMBASSADOR, BOUMEDIENE ASKED ONLY FOR THE AMBASSADOR'S RUNDOWN ON THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN THE OGADEN AND GAVE THE AMBASSADOR HIS VIEWS ON THE MIDDLE EAST CRISIS. END COMMENTT
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To: STATE
Type: TE
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Review Markings:
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Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014